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The Women's Quarterly

Violence Against Taxpayers

Why the new $1.5 billion Violence Against Women Act won't protect women from violent crime, but will subject them to an assault of "abuse experts." *Betsy Hart* reports

Buried in the $30 billion crime bill passed by Congress in August was more than $1.5 billion earmarked to fight violence against women. The "Violence Against Women Act," as the provision is called, declared that "All persons within the United States shall have the right to be free from crimes motivated by gender [sic]." To this end, millions of dollars will be spent upon new hot lines, increased funding to counseling services and research organizations looking into domestic violence, training and "sensitivity" programs to "educate" judges and court personnel in domestic abuse, even a pilot program to teach elementary school children about "domestic violence and violence among intimate partners."

Motivating this massive expenditure were claims put forth by national advocacy groups, such as the Battered Women's Justice Project and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, that "at least three to four million women each year are physically abused," that "six out of 10 married couples have experienced violence" and "more than one third [of wives] are battered repeatedly every year."

Judging by these figures, it would seem that violence against women, and domestic abuse in particular, are threats to society as grave and escalating as gangland murders. But the truth is, the number of sexual assaults actually *fell* last year from the year before – by as much as 20%, according to the latest National Crime Victimization Survey issued by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. (In 1993, a total of 485,000 sexual attacks were committed, includ-

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Illustration by Yuri Kolyadenko

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Diary

The Personal *Isn't* Political

I ONCE HAD the pleasure of lunching with an elderly lady who had known Beatrice Webb, of the fabled Fabian circle. "Was it difficult for Beatrice Webb – and women in those days – to put forth their ideas?" I wondered aloud. "Were they as oppressed as we imagine them?"

"My goodness, no," the gentle lady replied, in a subversive whisper. "They were *terrifying*."

My friend's surprise that I could suggest Beatrice Webb was "oppressed" showed her to be from a time that could still distinguish between personality and politics. She understood that the generations of women before our own may have lacked political rights. On the other hand, she could not subscribe to the view, now pervasive, which defines the complex web of relations between men and women crudely in political terms: that reduces it to an equation of power alone.

I think of my Edwardian friend when I hear women voice dismay at the feminist movement's current "radicalism." There is the feeling that feminism has gone "too far," that it is too censorious and venomous. Often the women who express these views participated in the heady early days of feminism, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They subscribe, in one form or another, to the myth of a Golden Age of feminism when women sought equality, and only equality. They complain that those early ideals have somehow been perverted into a new ideology of female supremacy.

Thus Christina Hoff Sommers, in her brave book *Who Stole Feminism?* (excerpted on p. 19), contends that feminists should "merely want for women what they want for everyone – a 'fair field and no favors.' [They should] ... not represent themselves as speaking for Women. They [should] make no dubious claims to unmask a social reality that most women fail to perceive." Sommers suggests feminism went wrong when it abandoned the visions of Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer. These thinkers, unlike their successors, offered women a "liberal version of consciousness-raising whose aim was to awaken them to new possibilities of individual self-fulfillment." Instead, she says, feminists have pursued the false and tyrannical doctrines of the Catherine McKinnons.

While feminists like McKinnon are in every way alarming, and writers like Sommers do us great service by doing battle with them, it is sheer nostalgia to imagine that the feminism of a bygone era was purely and benevolently concerned with fairness. The feminism of 25 years ago was, in its way, as radical as any of the ideas being broached by feminists of today. If anything, the excesses of McKinnonism can be seen as a natural reaction to the impossibility of the hopes of Friedan, Greer and company that the differences between men and women could be abolished by law.

This is not to say that no good whatsoever came out of Friedan's wave of feminism. But its failures can be traced directly to the flawed theory that is the basis of all feminism, a theory contained in the famous slogan: "The Personal Is Political." The older feminists were the ones who first defined sex as an expression of male power: Some, like Greer, concluded that women should therefore gain power of their own by being promiscuous; others, like Kate Millet, perceived an entire structure of oppression in a construction worker's wink. Either way, it was a very short step to today's feminist policing of college campuses and the demand that every leering frat boy be expelled.

The solution to this state of affairs, I think, is not to try to transform feminism again, nor to revert to an idealized vision of what it was in the past. It is time, rather, to bury feminism entirely. I'm not eccentric in my opinion. In a recent Gallup survey conducted for the women's magazine *Marie Claire*, 57% of women over 18 said feminist leaders do not reflect the views of a majority of U. S. women, and 51% said the women's movement is "hurting" relations between the sexes. Top "women's issues" for the those surveyed were, in this order: crime prevention, an improved education system and a better health care system. In other words, not abortion, rape or spousal abuse. The current "female" agenda does not look so different from that put forth by the Republicans and Democrats for the populace as a whole.

I don't think this general rejection of the label "feminist" is cause for anguish. As a youngish woman (31) who will not call herself a feminist, it seems no great mystery to me why others won't either. We (if I may take license, and use the word "we") are not ignorant of what feminism is. We are not "ungrateful." We are not the deluded victims of some "backlash." We are simply tired of parsing the world in ideological terms; we are sick of "isms."

There is a story told about my great-grandmother, who lived in the Blue Mountains of Australia. Legend has it that she one day unwittingly invited in a bandit who showed up at her door, and served him tea. Upon discovering who he was, she chased him away with her shotgun.

Now, if I could somehow go back in time to ask my great-grandmother about the political status of women in backwoods Australia at the turn of the century, there's no doubt she would reel off a list of complaints. But if I were to suggest to her that she herself was a victim of "patriarchy," oppressed by the men in her life – well, I suspect she would chase me out with a shotgun, too.

–Danielle Crittenden

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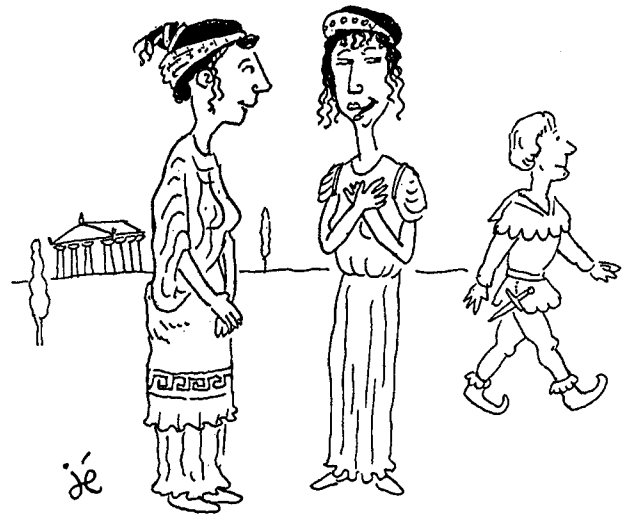

"He's positively medieval."

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Continued from page 1

ing rape, attempted rape and non-rape sexual assaults.) Federal statistics also show that women are 40% less likely than men to be victims of violent crime, and that domestic violence is not nearly the greatest source of violent crime facing women. In fact, lovers, husbands and ex-husbands together account for about 18% of criminal attacks against women (husbands account for only 2%). Complete strangers, on the other hand, account for 44%. Marriage is actually a safe haven for a woman: a married woman who lives with her husband is almost one-fifth as likely as a single, separated or divorced woman to be a victim of violent crime in general, and almost one-tenth as likely to be raped.

This is not to say that violence against women, particularly at the hands of men they know or love, is not a problem, nor even one worthy of national attention. Whatever sort of problem it is, however, will not be addressed by the Violence Against Women Act. There is probably not one woman in America who will be safer thanks to Congress' munificence. Most of the money will be allocated to advocacy groups that generate distorted and hysterical statistics rather than to efforts that might really help women – and all crime victims – such as increasing police forces, building prisons, and jailing repeat offenders (a Ford Foundation study found that almost half of known batterers had prior histories of criminal violence).

An official at the Department of Health and Human Services (one of two departments that will disperse the grants; the other is the Justice Department) confirms that four advocacy groups – the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, the Battered Women's Justice Project, the Resource Center on Child Custody and Protection, and the Health Resources Center on Domestic Violence – will be the primary consultants in determining how the money will be spent. As well, the official said, HHS and Justice will be looking to state coalitions of battered women's shelters and victims of violence for advice.

These groups view violence against women not as a criminal problem but as an ideological one. As Karen Leudtke, an information specialist at the Battered Women's Justice Project, told me: "It's not just one person hitting another, it's about power and control over other people – including emotional and financial abuse. It's a societal problem that starts when one person is raised with the belief that he deserves power over other people." Or, as Gloria Steinem has put it, "the most dangerous situation for a woman is not an unknown man in the street, or even the enemy in wartime, but a husband or lover in the isolation of their own home." In other words, violence is in the nature of the larger, ongoing power struggle between men and women.

This belief, and the influence of the organizations that advocate it, has already had much influence upon our law. Alexandria, Virginia, for instance, has a mandatory arrest policy in cases of domestic abuse: that is, police officers called to a domestic dispute (even by a neighbor) *must* make an arrest if any offense, no matter how minor, has been committed. Almost always, police arrest the man. The federal crime bill sets aside money to increase such mandatory arrest programs. This will encourage domestic abuse "follow-up" services, again like Alexandria's. There, in *every* instance of a domestic dispute, the woman involved is contacted by the local Office of Women – which oversees Alexandria's women's shelters – and offered its services, even if the woman does not wish to pursue the matter, or voluntarily takes blame for the incident. If there has been an arrest, the Office of Women encourages the woman to press charges. Norma Gattsek, director of the organization, boasts of a "60% to 70% success ratio after contacting women in getting them to press charges."

Gattsek is typical of the sort of advocate, running the sort of service, who will most benefit from the crime bill's largess. The literature she hands out to victims of battery reiterates the claim that "millions of women are physically and emotionally abused by their husbands or partner each year. Chances are, someone you know – your sister, friend, co-worker or neighbor – is a victim of domestic violence." Gattsek supports this statement by saying that the overwhelming majority of victims "never tell anyone." (Which begs the question: How does she know?) She said that her shelter treats some 400 women a month, victims whom she described as being "generally poor," although she insisted that abuse "occurs at all income and demographic levels." For that claim, however, she could offer no corroboration. The Alexandria Office of Women will, according to Gattsek, "be looking to apply for anything that we might be eligible for" under the new crime bill.

How is it that Congress could take such interest groups – and their false array of data contradicting the Justice Department's own statistics – so seriously? Why reward them with $1.5 billion and a Violence Against Women Act?

Perhaps it is because feminist organizations, like the good ol' boy lobbies

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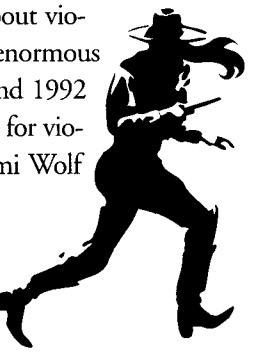
of farmers and auto workers, have become a powerful political force. Also like farm and union lobbyists, their interests long ago diverged from the common good – and in this case, even from the interests of the victims they claim to represent. In the wake of such divisive and politicized events as the Anita Hill–Clarence Thomas hearings and the O.J. Simpson murder trial, no politician dares step forth against "women." Steven Moore of the Cato Institute, who worked in opposition to the crime bill, echoed the sentiments of many staffers on Capitol Hill when he told me, "Even when it comes to Republicans, anything labeled 'women's rights' or 'women's issues' is sure to pass. Almost no one looks at the merits – they are afraid to touch it." Senate Republicans, under the leadership of Bob Dole, were particularly reluctant to be seen blocking the "Violence Against Women" portion of the Clinton crime bill.

Thus, the Violence Against Women Act will do nothing to protect women from crime. It will, though, perpetuate false information, waste money and urge vulnerable women to mistrust all men. ✦

Betsy Hart is a columnist for Scripps Howard News Service *and a frequent commentator on* To The Contrary, *a public affairs show on PBS.*

ANNIE, GET YOUR GUN

SISTERHOOD *IS* POWERFUL. Put aside, for a moment, violence *against* women. What about violence *by* women? The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports show that women have made enormous strides over the past two decades toward equality with male criminals. Between 1983 and 1992 (the most recent year for which figures are available), the number of women over age 18 arrested for violent crimes rose a whopping 72.9%; for women under 18, the increase was nearly 83%. Naomi Wolf rejoice: Women *are* taking the new female power – and using it ...

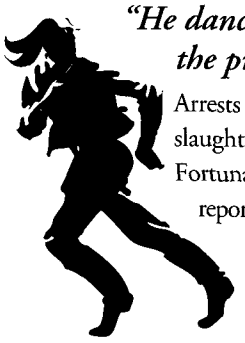


"He said 'No' but I knew he really wanted it."

Arrests for forcible rape by women over 18 rose 46.5% and *91.5%* (our emphasis) for women under 18. Early sex education is, at last, teaching women to go after their needs in the bedroom as aggressively as men.

"If women earned the same as men, we wouldn't have to do this."

Arrests for robbery shot up by 39.4% among women over 18 and 56.9% among women under 18.



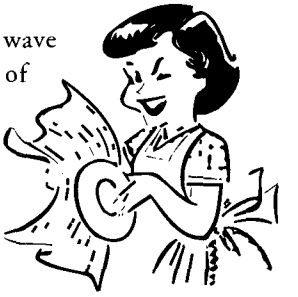
"He danced with another girl at the prom, so I shot him."

Arrests for murder and non-negligent manslaughter by women under 18 rose 15.5%. Fortunately – the only bright spot in all the reports – arrests for women over 18 declined 14.2%, indicating that it may still be safe for husbands to ask their wives *nicely* to darn their socks.

"He never let me drive and would never ask for directions."

Women have convincingly refuted the sexist cliché that they don't know what's under a car's hood. Arrests for motor vehicle theft rose dramatically, by 104% for women over 18 and 148.5% for women under 18.

"This is for all the thanks I get around here ...!"



The most startling crime wave occurred in the category of arrests for "offenses against family and children." Among women over age 18, the rise was 235.5% and for women under 18, it was 200.7%. Warning to kids: Don't be *too* insistent the next time you want to watch *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* when Mom's crabby and *Oprah* is on. ✦

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Dispatch

Equal Pay for Less Work

Karen Selick explains why lawyers on the Mommy Track should not be paid the same as those on the Partner Track

Law firms are being accused of a new type of discrimination: unfairly penalizing women who take time off to bear and raise children. Women who forgo motherhood, or place their infants quickly into daycare and keep up the brutal hours firms demand, get rewarded with partnerships quicker than those who don't. Why, some ask, shouldn't this mean-spirited double standard be softened?

While U.S. firms are still blinking their eyes at this proposition, the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) has rushed to embrace it, issuing a recommendation that those who take time away for "family responsibilities" should rise through the ranks as quickly as, and be paid equally to, those who rarely get home to dinner before nine. The fight that has erupted in Canada over the recommendation should be heeded as a warning of the coming battle firms will face further south.

Briefly, the controversy began when the CBA published its "Report on Gender Equality in the Legal Profession." Under the chairmanship of a former Canadian Supreme Court justice, Bertha Wilson, the report demanded that law firms "set realistic targets of billable hours for women with child-rearing responsibilities," and that "the reduced target should not delay or affect eligibility for partnership *nor affect normal compensation* [emphasis added]." Both of these recommendations were to be considered a legal duty. At this year's CBA convention, held in August, the report met with some resistance: Some compromise resolutions were passed, but the most controversial portions of the report were tabled, to be fought over another day. Bertha Wilson and her supporters declared themselves undaunted. They will return.

Surrounding these recommendations is a velvet-gloved commentary acknowledging that many different factors would have to be considered in determining a reasonable level of accommodation for individual women. However, the iron fist peeps out when the task force cites two reports prepared by other organizations (a lawyers' group in Boston and an engineering group of unspecified origin), each of which recommended that a reduction of 20% in working hours would be reasonable and "should not affect levels of benefits." Many years ago, feminists campaigned under the slogan "equal pay for equal work." Having achieved that goal, they turned their crusade in the 1970s and 1980s into a quest for the nebulous "equal pay for work of equal value." Now, it appears, the final step in the progression is being taken, and it is outrageous: women lawyers are now demanding equal pay for 20% less work.

It is revealing to note that this desire to let lawyers "have a life" (in the words

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of one proponent of the recommendations) arises only in the context of child-rearing. No slack will be cut for a childless lawyer who wishes to curtail her office hours and spend the extra time pursuing a hobby of ballroom dancing, marathon running or novel writing. Nor is there any suggestion a father will be accommodated for being a modern dad.

Why the difference? The underlying premise seems to be that women who decide to raise children are somehow doing it not for their own satisfaction, but for the benefit of the world at large. When I have written articles on this subject in the past, letters to the editor have poured in arguing that mothers deserve special treatment because they are raising the children who will someday be our doctors, nurses, secretaries, bakers, tailors and even undertakers.

However, when the time comes for us to employ the services of today's children, they are not going to work for free. We are going to have to pay them for their labor. Built into the price of their services will be an element which will constitute a return of the capital they and their parents have invested in making them into marketable workers. Their future customers should not be obliged to pay for this once (speculatively) in advance and again (inescapably) at the time of purchase. After all, some of these children we are being asked to subsidize won't turn out to be good little worker bees. Some of them will turn out to be incorrigible criminals or drunken bums. Until we know which will be which, we cannot say that encouraging women to add children to the population is necessarily a good thing.

Most people recognize that there are benefits to be gained from living in society, rather than on a desert island or as a hermit; we obtain economies of scale and specialization of labor, as well as the emotional rewards of interacting with other human beings. But each of us who participates in society pays for those benefits in kind. Certainly, the existence of a future generation of doctors and bakers will be an advantage to me; but my existence will be a reciprocal advantage to them. They'll need customers. They'll need legal advice. And if there is something especially beneficial to society about the existence of young children – perhaps because of their innocence, or the cute things they say – then each of us has already paid for this benefit in kind, by having once been cute, innocent children ourselves.

There is, too, something horrifying in the notion that

Women's World

Cynthia Grenier digests the women's monthlies

Relationships: Keep the camera on the new baby

"Is it smart to videotape sex?
"Even if a woman feels that she can absolutely trust her husband to keep sex tapes private, the reality of the high divorce rate in this country should be enough to give her pause. If a couple's split up turns nasty, explicit videos could be used to embarrass a former partner or even as leverage in the settlement." – *Glamour,* October 1994

Financial advice from Ivana Trump

"She's young, makes $60,000, and saves next to nothing. Sounds right, says one expert."
– *Elle,* November 1994

Career advice from Pamela Harriman

"For the first time, U.S. women are flying in combat squadrons and serving on warships – and it all began with one woman and an incident of sexual assault."– *Glamour,* November 1994

Fashion: The New Glamor vs. torture by the North Vietnamese

"The Paris couture … is an exercise cut free from workaday practicalities. Its receptors are tuned to only the highest frequencies of desire and fantasy, impulses it catches out of the air and pins on the body with results that sometimes shock. For fall, there are the appalling exquisite temptations of nipped-in waists, padded bras and high heels. Without question, these are some of the most demanding clothes to have been thrown in our path since the '50s. They ask a lot of the wearer. An undeniable sacrifice of comfort and mobility…"
– *Harper's Bazaar,* October 1994

Parenting: Time to buy a G. I. Joe?

"Six-year old Ben's mother and father are thrilled that he relates sensitively with girls – including them in play dates, being considerate of their feelings, encouraging them to excel at sports – but then they ache when the other boys in his class ostracize him for his girl-friendly attitude." – *McCalls,* November 1994

Cynthia Grenier writes 'The Mag Trade' column for the Washington Times

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women who bear children are doing it for the sake of society. It makes me think of Winston Smith, protagonist of George Orwell's *1984*, whose wife referred to the couple's awkward attempts at procreation as "our duty to the party." The implications of this attitude are far-reaching. If I disapprove of the way in which my future doctor and baker are being raised, do I have the right to intervene to protect my investment? If I think my neighbor is doing a bad job raising her firstborn, do I have the right to prevent her from giving birth to a second child? If she is doing it for me, isn't it logical that I should have a veto?

We can escape these nightmarish consequences only by recognizing that women who choose to raise children do so, not for society's sake, but for their own – and, one hopes, their husbands' – sakes. As with every other option in life, they will have to weigh the costs and benefits of their decision. It may turn out, when we all cash in our chips, that the lawyers who didn't docket 1,700 billable hours a year, who spent evenings and weekends at home rather than at the office and who treated law as a job rather than an all-consuming obsession, will have had much happier lives than those who did the opposite. We'll never know; it's impossible to compare degrees of happiness between different people. We can almost guarantee, however, that they won't have earned as much money, or gained as much renown.

If the emotional rewards of motherhood are not sufficient compensation for the loss of income and prestige, women should not choose them. Above all, however, they should not choose the benefits of motherhood, and then demand that their legal colleagues – many of whom have themselves decided to forgo those benefits – compensate them for their losses.

Bertha Wilson has argued that if law firms aren't persuaded by what she terms "idealism," they should at least consider adopting her recommendations out of self-interest. They won't get the best new recruits if they refuse to accommodate the increasing percentage of young graduates who are female. A firm's emphasis on long hours may be creating tired, stressed-out employees who are less productive in all of their working hours than they would be if they were taking more time off for personal pursuits.

These arguments may be true; only the trial-and-error process of the marketplace will tell us for sure. What we can count on is that if there is a way for law firms to improve productivity and profits, competitive forces will make them seek it voluntarily. There is no need to make this a legal duty.

One thing the legal profession could do to maximize satisfaction among all its members is to work for liberalized laws that would allow lawyers to sort themselves into firms that best match up with their own wishes. Employees should not be forced into a mold that does not suit them, nor should law firms be required to implement policies that benefit some lawyers at the expense of others. The problem is, we are all hamstrung in this sorting process by the bugaboo of sexual discrimination charges. Employers can't question prospective employees about their intentions to take maternity leave or to work reduced hours so that they can spend more time with their children.

The result is the confounding of two different groups of women, with destructive results for everyone. Women who place their families first will sometimes be hired by firms with contrary expectations. Women who place their careers first will sometimes be passed over by recruiters who have no information to rely on except the published statistics that tell them this candidate, being female, is more likely than a man to take time off, work shorter hours or leave the profession altogether.

The solution is to encourage the exploration of these issues during job interviews, not to forbid it. Needless to say, the Bertha Wilson report proposes exactly the opposite. The effect of banning this kind of inquiry is to shift the cost of some women's preference for motherhood onto other women who don't intend to become mothers. The latter will not have an opportunity to make this attractive attribute known to prospective employers, and will be viewed with the same caution as their less career-oriented sisters.

The Bertha Wilson task force set itself up as the champion of women lawyers, but the truth is that the increasing polarization of the legal community is not along male-female lines – it is along ideological ones. Wilson and her supporters advocate a collectivization, a socialization of the legal profession. Jobs and incomes would be redistributed from those who are willing to satisfy the demands of the market to those who aren't. Individuals of both sexes should recognize the split as one between opposing ideological camps, and should refuse to be drawn into a battle against the opposite sex. ✦

Karen Selick, a lawyer, is a columnist for Canadian Lawyer *magazine.*

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Give a Little Whistle!

Anne Roche Muggeridge wishes more men would pucker up and blow

THE MORNING NEWSPAPER lately published an exchange of views on how to deal with unwanted sexual advances from strangers. In the first piece, a television producer told how she had dealt victoriously with "the Perv" who leaned in at her and made lewd comments about "the particular part of my anatomy he felt entitled to comment on." She hauled off and hit him "mid-body" with "accuracy and force."

"Sisters, this one is for you," she said, to every woman who'd suffered similar experiences in humiliation and silence.

In response, a writer took the woman to task for acting "exactly the way a man – a 'real man' – would in the same situation." Here was a woman who had suffered from violence recommending violence, the writer said. "Prove that we're as good as men by being as bad as men?" No. "Women are different. We think and feel differently." When women "turn away from taunts and wolf-whistles, they aren't chickening out." They're avoiding "unnecessary confrontation" and removing themselves from an "undignified situation."

The random and humiliating sexual affront is something females are vulnerable to from cradle to grave. I've had my share of run-ins with Pervs – sick loners – and have ignored street taunts, and the horrid, silent, cold-faced girl-watching in school corridors and pubs. And I've been whistled at. It's not the kind of

thing one wants to admit to these days, but I liked being whistled at. I liked it very much. I wish I were still in the being-whistled-at age bracket.

I first heard the full-chorus wolf whistle in the Newfoundland seaport where I was born and grew up. We were still a British colony, so from early on in the Second World War the town was often full of sailors, British and locals, on shore leave. One cool summer evening when I was five or six, I was walking with my mother down the narrow main street, holding her hand, when we came upon a group of sailors, perhaps a dozen, standing under the overhang of a store front. They instantly whistled, as one man – a spontaneous couple of notes, sharp and melodious, one curving upwards, the other down – expressive, even to my infant understanding, of strong approval of my mother. The sailors were staring at her and I turned to look at her too. She blushed, lowered her eyes, looked grave and turned us away from the sailors.

"Mommy, why did they do that?" I asked in amazement. She didn't answer. Then for the first time in my life I really looked at my mother, seeing her in herself, someone separate from me. I realized that she was beautiful – tall, slim and strong, with her wide shoulders, long straight back and splendid carriage. It was not till years later, when I first read Jane Austen, that I found the term that described the expression on my mother's face after the sailors whistled. She hadn't looked displeased; she'd looked "conscious," a state which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "knowing in oneself, knowing something with others."

The summer I was 19, I sailed from the same seaport to England with a friend, the only passengers on a merchant ship. It was cold and we were sometimes seasick, but the weather turned splendid as the ship crept up the estuary to dock. We were excited by the ocean crossing and the prospect of beginning a European trip on our own. We had the minimum of baggage but we'd each included one pretty dress, and we put it on and went forward in the beautiful evening to watch the docking. The ship had to pass through a narrow lift bridge. Traffic had obviously been held up for some time, and most people had left their cars to watch the maneuver. As the ship inched into the bridge passage, there was a deafening burst of whistling – the classic theme with a defi-

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nite note of pleased surprise; *we* hadn't been expected. Like my mother, I blushed furiously and looked away.

"Did you expect this to happen?" I asked my friend, who was several years older than I and not at all disconcerted.

"Of course I did," she said.

I hadn't foreseen the welcome, but this time I felt "conscious" and gratified.

The nicest of whistle-stops, the cream of my crop, happened just after I'd moved to a new city as a young bride. It was a glorious summer day and I was perfectly happy, pushing my brand new son in his pram, feeling well and pretty in my gauzy dress. I got lost, and turned into a street I didn't know. It was bisected by a vast ditch. There was nowhere to cross, so I walked alongside it. Suddenly, a young man in a yellow helmet emerged at the top of a ladder from the ditch, saw me, swept off his hat and whistled. At once, every few feet, other men in hard hats began to emerge, and as they surfaced, they whistled. They were dark, lithe and handsome. Some looked quite old, but then, almost everyone looked old to me at that time. The older ones didn't whistle. They lifted their hard hats in courteous gesture, bowed and called out "Bella! Bella!" with a long caressing accent on the first syllable. I blushed but this time I also smiled, all the rest of my way along the strange ditch. Only later did I learn that they were Italian laborers brought over to dig the subways. Perhaps the gallantry of their salute owed something to their longing for their own families left behind.

I object to the feminist attempt to consign the wolf whistle to the Index of Forbidden Behavior, along with mashers and Pervs. Whistling at girls isn't obscene. It isn't jeering or threatening. It's a salute to youth and beauty, applause for a good presentation. Girls don't know whether they're pretty or not. They stand in despair in front of their mirrors and wail to their mothers: "I look so ugly! I can't go out looking like this! What am I going to *do*?" And their mothers, gazing at their shining hair, their dewy skin, their rose-petal complexions, protest: "Oh, my darling, no! You're so beautiful!" And the daughters don't believe it. But when a group of young, handsome male strangers spontaneously burst into a chorus of admiring notes, a girl must, even in her confusion and diffidence, experience a glow of pleasure and a dawning self-confidence. She knows something new about herself, and she knows that others know it.

Whistling is incident-free. It doesn't have a prologue or epilogue. At least, it didn't in my experiences, and my teen-aged daughter and her friends tell me it doesn't in theirs. I asked them if they still get whistled at on the street. Sometimes, they told me. Not often. Mostly they get whistled at from passing cars. How did they respond? Usually they looked away; sometimes they smiled. Did they like being whistled at? Longish pause. Yeah, they said, in notes as approving and musical as those of the passing wolf. Was there any follow up? None.

Whistling is natural, the earliest and sweetest of courting moves. Charles Darwin speculated that the musical cadences of birdsong were imitated by the distant ancestors of man to initiate sexual selection and courtship. There is a bird in our garden who sings the same two notes as those in the human courting trill, over and over in the spring. It's one of the cardinal's many songs, I think, but I'm not a skilled enough birdwatcher to identify it. I smile to hear him though.

There is, too, a dynamic other than that of simple male recognition of female sexual maturation involved in a young man's impulse to whistle at certain young women. Just being a pretty girl isn't necessarily enough to trigger the response. The second force is not sexual in the sense that it is confined to one sex only. Girls get whistled at not only because they're attractive, but because they're in high spirits, exultant, full of modest pleasure at being grown up and approvingly noticed. I got whistled at on the ship and by the laborers because my life had turned rich and adventurous and I was expressing my joy in suitable body language.

Through a pleasant occurrence of serendipity, coincident with my having written the above paragraph, I came upon "The Bonus," a wonderful true poem by Elizabeth Smart. I wish I could quote it all. Find it if you can. She had just mailed a poem that she felt very pleased about. She was dirty and roughly dressed and had circles under her eyes from a night's writing, and was "far, far from flirtation" but she felt "full of completion." *Such a starry elation / Came over me / That I got whistled at in the street / For the first time in a long time.* She must have looked as if she were in love, she said, or on a fabulous holiday. She found the young men's response "most mysterious." I was delighted to have my intuitions corroborated by a fine, though tragic, poet.

Women are different from men – and, say I, long live the difference – but we're not wholly other. We are the complement of their difference, and they of ours. Together we make human nature complete and perfect. ✦

Anne Roche Muggeridge is author of The Desolate City *(Harper & Row:1990).*

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"I'm Not Dead Yet!"

Danielle Crittenden on our eagerness to dispatch with the sick and dying

My Father, in his last months, became one of those scary old men in a hospital bed. His body, ravaged by multiple sclerosis, had long ceased to obey his commands except for one faulty hand which could shakily lift a glass of juice. Tubes were inserted, indecently, everywhere, with clear fluids going in and cloudy ones coming out. The parts of him visible above the modest covering of a blue sheet were pasty, bent and scarred from the many past intrusions of tubes. He was often without his false teeth, which made his mouth appear oddly collapsed. His vision was too poor to watch television or to read, and headphones caused him discomfort, so he lay there, day after day, his watery blue eyes focused only on his thoughts. The sight of him repelled the nurses. They handled him roughly, the way a grocer would treat rotted fruit. Occasionally they would act upon his requests, like fetching a second blanket, but usually he was left to press his call button pointlessly. Although he retained most of his wits and the ability to speak slurringly, the tendency of the staff was to room him with the senile and insane.

At this stage of his illness, there was much talk by his doctors about his "quality of life." By any objective measure, he had little. When he was deemed fit enough to leave the hospital, he returned home to another hospital-style bed, where he was constantly under the care of attendants. The doctors warned that he was on a sharp downward trajectory. No matter what medical intervention they could offer, my father was condemned for the remainder of his life (months, years – they could not say) to bounce back and forth between the emergency room and his apartment, surviving one infection only to face the onslaught of another. When my father ended up in intensive care one day, and all that lay between him and death were some numbers on a computer screen and the mechanical inhaling of a respirator, the doctors suggested we sign a "Do Not Resuscitate" order. That way, when one of his organs failed or an infection set in, his wasted body would at last be able to pass quickly into the night.

There was just one snag. My father, despite all the cords and monitors and IV bags dangling around him, was still very much conscious. And he indicated that he had a strong desire to live.

This fact did not faze the doctors. They still came to us in that little purgatory of a waiting room, wondering whether or not we wished to go ahead and sign the order anyway. They implied – in that way doctors have of speaking, like the anointed, in tongues – that my father could not know what was in his best interest; that he was the victim of deluded deathbed thinking. Of course they did not advocate that we cut off all support systems directly, not yet. They spoke in the hypothetical: "If he has a

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heart attack," "If his liver fails," etc. They reminded us again of his negligible "quality of life." And when we declined to sign, the doctors accepted our directions, but not without conveying mild disapproval. My stepmother asked me uneasily, "Are we wrong?" My brother agonized over whether or not we were interfering with "nature" and "God's will" in "artificially" prolonging our father's life. I asked friends what they would do in our situation. With very few exceptions, they shared the doctors' view. There was a general sense of repugnance toward my father's condition. In his state, they avowed, they would rather be dead.

Indeed, when I saw my father again in his intensive care room, he looked closer to the next life than this one. Only the gentle shaking of his hand and the rhythmic breathing of the respirator indicated he was still with us, sleeping. Yet his determined will could be charted in a number displayed on one of the computers. These numbers took on talismanic properties. Ninety was magic. If his blood pressure went above 90, that was a good sign. For a night it hovered in the 70s and 80s. It changed second by second – 79, 83, 85, 81. By morning it had climbed over 100 and stayed up there: 105, 112, 125. His breathing improved, his complexion returned. He couldn't talk because of the oxygen mask but he nodded, pointed and even spelled his requests if I said the alphabet out loud: T-Y-L-E-N-O-L. It seemed he would pull through this bout, like he had the others.

In the corridor I passed his nurse and boasted about his turnaround. The doctor had said my father could be moved to a regular ward and, maybe in as little as a week, return home. She offered me an abbreviated smile and launched into some horrid stories about the chronically sick whom she had tended, patients like my father who simply wouldn't let go. My father, she reminded me, would continue to deteriorate until, simply, his lungs collapsed, or some trauma reduced him to a vegetable hooked up to a machine. Did we, as his family, really wish this for him? If he couldn't confront these circumstances rationally, then perhaps we'd have to do it for him.

"Suffocation is a pleasant death, you know," she said soothingly. "They just drift off peacefully, losing air ...."

As I left the hospital, I imagined that if I worked in such a place, I too would begin to view human lives the way a mechanic regards the broken cars that are towed to his garage. In the intensive care ward, especially, one is forced to make quick and crude decisions about who warrants repair, and who does not. In one room, perhaps, is a young accountant who, the day previous, was a healthy man crossing at a light, and is now the smashed-up victim of a traffic accident, struggling for every breath. The doctor takes to his case with zeal: There is the possibility he can fix him and put him back on the road, as good as new. But the old junks like my dad who get hauled in — well, the doctor can tinker with them and patch them together, but ultimately he is just sustaining them until they break down irreparably. That's without even considering the bill. How much was it costing to keep my father going for even five minutes on this ward? This was taking place, after all, in Toronto, where my family lives, under the nearly bankrupt Canadian medical system. Were we not asking a lot of the already overburdened taxpayers to support such a sickly, unproductive citizen?

Still, the "please resuscitate" order stood. For I had come to have some dark thoughts about the doctors and their almost mantra-like repetition of the phrase "quality of life." For what, actually, did they mean?

True, my father did not seem to have much of it. But then, by their standards, he might never have had much of it. Dad was raised under hard circumstances in Australia, he lived all his life in hard circumstances and in the end he would die under hard circumstances. He often reminded me of one of those hearty species of plants you'd find growing, improbably, through the dry cracks of soil in the Australian outback: No amount of heat or drought could defeat him. He lost his mother when he was very young, and an elder brother in World War II. He left home and all that he knew in his early twenties to come to Canada, where he made a successful life for himself as a newspaper editor, although one that didn't pay him very much – and he was never good at saving. Late into his forties, when he had accumulated enough money, at last, to enjoy a small amount of leisure, he was hit by his disease. From then on, he greeted each new year at a lower level of ability. His cane evolved into a scooter, which evolved into an electric wheelchair.

Still he persisted in overcoming his disabilities. At one point he managed to publish a magazine for the handicapped from his bed, and go on television to promote it. Even in his last year, he would venture downtown to have lunch with his granddaughter. On weekends, he accompanied my stepmother on walks through the park. Throughout all of this, he kept up his appallingly corny wit. On his first visit

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to an intensive care ward four years ago, Dad had an oxygen tube inserted through his throat. He could communicate with us only by pointing to the letters of an alphabet written on a piece of cardboard. Of course it was very difficult to carry on a conversation with someone on an oxygen tube. I offered: "Well, Dad, when you get out of here, you're going to need a haircut." His hand began to tremble, indicating the alphabet, and very laboriously he spelled out, "Which one?"

The jokes were fewer in his last visit, but they were still there. And when he was moved from intensive care to the regular ward (next to a man who periodically let out shrieks), I sat with him and wondered aloud what I could do to help him pass the time, since he couldn't read or watch TV. Wasn't he very bored? He brushed the remark aside, shaking his head. He had trouble speaking, but he managed to say: "I've been thinking of a really great novel plot for you – It's about global warming ...."

So that was his quality of life. He lay there and imagined wonderful stories. When he was, as the doctor promised, out of intensive care and recovered enough to send home, he resumed smoking his beloved cigarettes and eating Kahlua-soaked dishes of ice cream. I sent him a basket of flowers – unusually vibrant lilies – that he had placed atop the TV where he could gaze at them. He followed the fiasco of last summer's baseball season. Early one evening my sister-in-law accompanied him through the park: again and again he exclaimed about the lushness of the leaves and grass, the tranquil beauty of the dusk.

My father demonstrated that, even when the body is circumscribed, the mind can still be a vast and luxurious place. What observer, no matter how sound his medical training, can judge what "quality of life" goes on inside it? To my father, the sight of the lilies and twilight, the pleasure he took in his memories and thoughts, were infinitely preferable to the alternative, the nothingness of death. To him what was important was the "quantity of life." He clung to every shred granted him.

A week after returning home from the hospital, my father died. One morning he woke up feeling strange and he was hastily sent back to the emergency room. No amount of medical intervention was able to sustain him against a swift and massive heart attack. We could bury him knowing that we had not deprived him of his final battle to live.

What if we had acted otherwise?

Arguments in favor of euthanasia tend to paint the circumstances in black and white strokes: Coma victims, registering no brain activity, lying inert month after month, with no hope of recovery. But in my father's case, the doctors had appeared unwilling even to let a man die at his own pace. Instead, they had asked us to make a divine decision – or rather, to second them in their divine decree that my father's life was no longer worth living, despite his protestations. We were to form a tribunal, my stepmother, brother and me: We could raise our thumbs up or down. I had joked with my father that he was lucky he had no money. Eager for our inheritance, we could have asked the doctors to bump him off while looking like the most sympathetic family in the world.

It is sadly ironic that modern medical technology is seen as a miraculous gift when it can cure a condition that, in another era, would have been fatal, but when it prolongs the life of the sick it is deemed wickedly "unnatural." Perhaps what is unnatural, however, is the way that we have come to regard the fatally ill. There is nothing more frightening than an intensive care room, particularly to the healthy, and so we hurry to dispatch the dying person as quickly as possible with the excuse that it is "kinder." It is convenient too. Administering to the sick, reading to them, helping to eke out their last moments of existence, is exhausting work. The pain of the observer sometimes seems greater than that of the sufferer.

Since my father's death, I've begun to wonder what I would have done in his situation. Would I have been eager to spare my family the ordeal of my illness? Could I have stared into the abyss and said, "Okay – now! – cut the oxygen"? I remember a story of my grandfather, a general and one of the courageous men of his time, as he lay dying of cancer. It took him six months longer to go than the doctors expected. He hated being sick but every fiber of his body told him to fight. "I'm sorry," he told his son, "but I just don't know how to die."

He did finally, as we all will; in his case, peacefully and without his loving family hastening him along. ✦

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If You Knew Marty Like I Knew Marty

Karen Fejer recalls her college sweetheart, the object of a $7.1 million sexual harassment jury verdict

"You can't spend all your life running from dangerous things 'cause sooner or later, I'm going to catch you!! Happy Valentine's Day. Love, Marty." (1963)

One recent Saturday morning I was browsing through the newspaper when I noticed an interesting story about a secretary in California who sued her boss for sexual harassment and was awarded $7.1 million by a jury. What an amazing amount of money, I thought. Then I read the name of her boss: Martin Greenstein. Martin Greenstein? I re-read it to make sure it was the same guy. The law firm was Baker & McKenzie. He was a patent attorney in the Palo Alto office. There was no mistake about it. It was Marty, my college boyfriend.

The facts of the case, according to the news story, showed Marty to have grown into a very crass man. Plaintiff Rena Weeks, a secretary, contended that Greenstein touched her breast while putting M&M candies into the pocket of her blouse. She accused him also of grabbing her from behind, shoving his knee into her back, pulling her backwards and saying, "Let's see which breast is bigger." Apparently, Greenstein had a long history of making these kinds of clumsy passes at secretaries, and Weeks, fed up, decided to take him to court.

Gross, offensive behavior, I thought, but a $7.1 million offense? Weeks, in fact, had only worked for him for 25 days before she complained and was transferred to another job beyond Marty's reach. Still, how could the man I'd been so smitten with in my youth have become the monster such a penalty would indicate?

Intensely curious, I decided to contact those involved. Weeks herself was unable to comment because the verdict was being challenged. However I managed to reach two of the witnesses who supported Weeks' claim: Donna Blow and Vicki Gardiner, both former secretaries, and Weeks' lawyers Phillip Kay and Alan Axelrod. According to Kay, Greenstein, a partner at the firm and head of the Palo Alto intellectual property department at the time of the incident, had sexually harassed a number of other women over a period of years, both in the Palo Alto office and prior to that at the firm's headquarters in Chicago. His conduct was well known within the firm, where he had a reputation as a chronic skirt-chaser. Six other female employees testified that Greenstein made unwanted advances to them: adolescent antics such as tickling an associate lawyer's foot and reaching under a secretary's blouse, grabbing her bra strap and asking if it was black.

"He seemed obsessed with sex in general," Blow told me. "There was testimony at the trial that while he was sexually harassing one person, he was sleeping with his secretary and still married to his wife."

The trial lasted six weeks. A jury of six men and six women handed down the $7.1 million judgment in September, believed to be the largest ever in a sexual harassment case. Weeks received $50,000 for emotional distress and $225,000 in punitive damages from Greenstein. The firm was hit with the bulk of the fine: $6.9 million in punitive damages for mishandling and ignoring years of complaints from the female staff. In November, a Californian State judge reduced the damages against Baker & McKenzie to $3.5 million.

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I was a freshman at Boston University in 1962. My dorm was in a crummy old brownstone on Beacon Street: a fourth floor walk-up with a toilet that flushed with a chain. A friend, Joyce, fixed me up with a guy who went to Tufts. He was tall and well built, the football hero type. His name was Marty.

He took me out every weekend – to parties, swim meets, movies, bowling. He phoned me all the time. I remember thinking "He really likes me!" and feeling very flattered. Marty was smart, too. He was studying engineering at Tufts, a notoriously hard course in which he got high grades. One weekend Marty took me for dinner at his parent's house in a suburb of Boston. Klutz that I am, I spilled tea all over the dinner table.

We dated steadily throughout my freshman year. The following summer he visited me in Toronto, my home town. My parents were impressed with Marty – so impressed that my father pulled me aside to tell me that if we wanted to get married, he'd support us both through school. My father felt, I'm sure, that a "M.R.S." degree was the most valuable one his daughter could obtain in college. Yet marriage was not something Marty and I ever discussed.

This was because I'd noticed a few characteristics about Marty that had begun to bother me. On the one hand, he was good-natured, an all-round nice guy with a playful sense of humor. On the other hand, he wasn't always entirely honest. For instance, he figured out some clever maneuver that allowed him to make free calls from pay phones. It was a modest exploitation of the phone company, but it disturbed me. There was also the time he got me into trouble when he cooked up a scheme to fix up his shy friend Dave with the resident nymphomaniac in my dorm, a girl named Toni. Toni was barely visible beneath a mop of teased, dyed black hair and slashes of inky eyeliner. She serviced a wide following of eager college boys from around the area. This was before even the dawn of the sexual revolution. Toni was the archetypal "bad girl."

Marty asked for permission to use my name to create a favorable impression with Toni. When I said "no" he told Dave to use my name anyway. Toni flew into a rage over this "insult" to her reputation. She had me hauled before the dorm council for a humiliating reprimand. Afterwards, Marty pretended nothing had happened and refused to talk about it.

Before I came back to Boston for my sophomore year, I wrote him a "Dear Marty" letter saying that I wanted to cool off our relationship. I was too cowardly to face him in person. Back in Boston, I dated other guys and saw Marty occasionally. We remained quite friendly with each other. After two years, I made the decision to return home and finish my education in Canada. Marty and I corresponded for a while, then lost touch.

Ten years later, I got a surprise call from Marty. He was in Toronto, on business. Would I go out for lunch with him the next day? There was something very odd about this, I thought. I was a suburban housewife with two little kids and a husband. How could I go out with an ex-boyfriend? I invited him over to my house for lunch instead.

Marty arrived just before my husband did. He wanted to know why I had broken up with him. His question startled me and I could offer only a flustered answer. I'd hurt him deeply, he said; made him feel he wasn't good enough. That was why he'd gone on to get his law degree after becoming an engineer. He questioned me about my relationship with my husband: Were we very close? Afterwards I wondered if he had been trying to find out whether I was "available."

In spite of the qualms I felt about Marty, it would never have occurred to me that he would become an "Exhibit A" type of sexual harasser. I knew he'd been divorced after an impulsive, early marriage. He was remarried, so I'd been told, to a lovely and intelligent woman. They had kids. Yet reports of Marty's unprofessional conduct went back years and years. If so – if this man that I remembered as handsome and ambitious, albeit with the usual array of human flaws, had become a hefty, middle-aged lunger at women – why had Baker & McKenzie tolerated it?

Lawyer Phillip Kay claims the firm averted its eyes because Greenstein was a "rainmaker" who generated huge amounts of business. Further, Kay says, new information has surfaced since the trial implicating "other partners at Baker & McKenzie who were doing the same thing or worse." Donna Blow confirms that she saw partners in the San Francisco office also sexually harassing women (the firm adamantly denies the charge). If true, it would seem that Baker & McKenzie had difficulty censuring Greenstein for behaving like one of the boys.

Donna Blow also points to the particular compensation scheme in place at Baker & McKenzie as fostering a "plantation mentality." Under this system, staff received their pay from the partner they reported to, rather than from the firm. Some partners, Blow

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said, "felt they owned the people who worked under them." Adds Vicki Gardiner, recalling an incident in which Greenstein grabbed her hips and thrust her body up against her desk with his body: "If I was on a bus, I would have slapped him, called the cops and reported him. But this was a working environment. I was very aware that he controlled the review process. My training is to be very professional on the job." Instead of slugging him, Gardiner lodged an anonymous complaint against Greenstein, which the firm ignored.

Adding to Gardiner's frustrations was the absence of support from the senior women partners. The one female partner she confided in listened but offered no help. "Women who have arrived and have power and money go along to get along, and it's extremely disappointing for a woman down in the ranks," mused Gardiner. After she reported Greenstein's harassment, she asked for a different placement within the firm. They bounced her around from one job to another; suddenly there were complaints about her work. She was told she was insubordinate. "I left voluntarily. I was exhausted, I was defeated, I couldn't fight anymore. I felt tremendous pressure. They closed every door."

Greenstein's defense against the sexual harassment charge, while not wholly convincing, does portray a different dynamic at work in the office. After speaking to Marty's co-counsel, Mary Shea, I was reminded of my encounter with Toni and the college dorm. Had some element of the secretaries' behavior or the environment at the law office led Marty to believe his actions were acceptable?

For instance, while Greenstein denied all of Rena Weeks' charges of harassment and inappropriate touching (corroborated by two witnesses for the defense), he did concede that he may have committed actions – including snapping a secretary's bra strap – and made remarks that were "misunderstood."

"These are people who work 16 hours a day. It was very stressful. People get punchy and there's a lot of quipping going on, a lot of word play and a lot of joking," said Shea. "Other people were doing it too."

According to Shea, Greenstein enjoyed what he thought was a good relationship with his secretaries, often taking them out for lunch and bringing them gifts when he returned from trips. Even Rena Weeks did not always rebuff him. She once brought him homemade zucchini bread. Shea claims that in the infamous "M&M" incident, it was Weeks herself who opened her shirt pocket for Marty to drop in the candies – and then became embarrassed when she remembered that she was braless. After the incident, Weeks offered to massage Greenstein's temples to relieve a tension headache. As for the accusation that he grabbed Weeks' hips when they were both loading a filing cabinet on to a van, Shea cites witness Tim Wollaston, a colleague, who described it as "a high school sort of thing. There was no sexual intent at all. She [Weeks] didn't even remember it. She had to be reminded, and suddenly it [became] a major part of her case."

Shea described Weeks as "very touchy. She'd take your hand and do reflexology or accupressure." As for Marty, he treated his colleagues like family. As one former employee told Shea: "He's a very loving sort of person."

Furthermore, Weeks never confronted Marty with her discomfort over his behavior. As one juror asked, "Why didn't she tell him to stop?"

This is not to say Marty didn't behave boorishly or unprofessionally. But the fact is, he did have – as Shea confirmed – two reciprocated relationships with women in the firm (although Shea denies they occurred when Greenstein was married). Clearly, not all of the staff regarded him as someone to be avoided.

The verdict probably hit Marty with the same surprising wallop that my Dear Marty letter had years earlier or Toni's indignant reaction to Dave's solicitous phone call. It was a steep award for jerky behavior. On top of the fine there was the public humiliation. The trial was carried nationally on Court TV, covered by CNN and *People* and reported by newspapers around the world. Ironically, the harassment suit was not the cause of Marty's dismissal from Baker & McKenzie. He was forced out for serious professional misconduct of another kind, stemming from the backdating of trademark documents. He now runs a one-man firm in San Jose.

I have a final memory of Marty from college. After we stopped dating, I went out one evening with a guy I'd met at a Harvard "mixer." He came on to me so aggressively that I had to physically fend him off. I was very shaken. Marty heard about the experience from a mutual friend. He was so upset, she told me, that he wanted to find the guy and beat him up.

I imagine that's something Marty has forgotten all about. ✦

Karen Fejer is a journalist who lives in Toronto.

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Daycare Dearest

Cathy Rindner Tempelsman wonders why the child rarely figures in the debate over child-care

Several years ago, my eldest child and her best friend were agonizing over what to be for Halloween. The other girl's mother and I looked on as our three-year-olds struggled to decide: fairy princess, ballerina or bride? We couldn't help asking, half in jest, "What? No CEOs?" At the time, both of us were contending with corporate careers. After becoming mothers, we'd changed to "part-time" schedules, which meant nine to five as opposed to the 11- and 12-hour days we had happily put in before giving birth. We were emblems of our time, Michael Porter's *Competitive Strategy* under one arm and Dr. Spock's guide under the other.

We'd intended to prove to our daughters that mommies work too. But clearly the girls had other things to straighten out that autumn: coping with the start of preschool and separation anxiety, for example, not to mention their sexual identities, which obviously had a great deal to do with the debate over their Halloween costumes. There are basic differences between men and women which a three-year-old girl identifies by donning twirling skirts and tutus, and shunning slacks; it is hardly a matter of ideology. For me, the holiday was a poignant lesson in looking at "what a child needs now," to use John Dewey's term. I had told myself that my daughter benefited from seeing me go to work. But "quality time" is tough to explain to a toddler. What she wanted, simply, was to have me around.

The issue came back to me last spring, when the Carnegie Corporation and the Families and Work Institute both issued new reports about child care. The Carnegie task force described a "quiet crisis" of substandard care for infants and toddlers whose parents worked. The Families and Work Institute, a prominent research group based in New York, echoed this finding. Together they painted a bleak picture, noting wide discrepancies in the quality of care that poor parents can afford compared with that available to more affluent families. Curiously, though, while both studies focused on different forms of daycare – from home-based to institutional – neither asked: How much is too much for a child?

The reluctance to pose that question was, of course, unsurprising. Raising the possibility that children don't benefit from daycare is taboo. It is often true that subsidized daycare centers can offer the most impoverished children a better, more stable environment than the one at home, but the effect of daycare on other children is relatively unknown. As the Families and Work Institute pointed out, children are spending increasing amounts of time in daycare, beginning at an earlier age. As soon as the quality of such care is called into question, however, feminists object: They invariably subordinate the best interests of children to the presumed interests of working women.

The study by the Families and Work Institute, for example, primarily looked at what it called "family child-care," a paradoxical term referring to care that usually takes place in the home of an adult unrelated to the child. About one third of all families with working mothers rely on "family child-care" (only 28% use daycare centers for children under the age of five), making it the most prevalent form of outside-the-home child-care in the country. The report found that the quality of this type of care tended to be "extremely

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variable," and worst for the children of poor and less-educated parents.

Within days of the study's release, Anna Quindlen responded with an angry column in the *New York Times.* She skirted over the report's more disturbing conclusions. What really bothered her was that the Families and Work Institute had established standards by which to compare the different forms of care (even though the criteria for the comparison were drawn from focus groups that included both parents and child-care providers). Quindlen contended that she herself – a New Jersey mother of three – might fail to meet the Institute's standards. Her response, implying that any criticism of daycare must be seen as an attack on a woman's right to work, unwittingly underscored the socio-economic gap between those who lobby for daycare and those who must use it. The women who enjoy the most success in combining work and family tend to be well-educated and well-paid. They can hire nannies, or they can adjust their hours to spend more time with their children. I can't help wondering how many of the well-placed women who sing the praises of daycare have to rely on it five days a week, from eight until six; or how many of them, like night-shift workers at a Midwest Toyota factory, deliver their children, groggy with sleep, to the plant's nursery at two in the morning.

We may wish otherwise, but what is in the best interests of a parent is not always in the best interests of a child. Over the past two decades we have heard claims that divorce and single-motherhood would not necessarily take a toll on children. Statistics now prove that the children of single-parent homes grow up to be poorer and less educated than the children of intact families.

Ideological blindness about daycare further undermines the importance of parents to their children. In her new book *Children First,* Penelope Leach says that all the effort to produce research demonstrating the merits of daycare ultimately devalues the family. If we really believed in family parenting, Leach contends, we would be demanding shorter daycare instead of "better" daycare that would allow mothers to spend ever-increasing amounts of time apart from their children. Leach insists that a mother's presence and nurturing – even if flawed – are critical to a child's well-being.

I know many families who are forgoing a second full-time income in the early years so that the mother can be with the children while they are very young. Some writers have labeled women who stay home with their children as victims of a "backlash" against feminism. I find it ironic that this accusation is usually made by women without children, who cannot possibly know how it feels to leave a sick child's bedside, or to deliver a newborn infant into a stranger's arms. The pressure to be with a young child comes as much from inside a mother as it does from outside. Instead of ridiculing such women, we should be lauding them for their willingness to shift their priorities. It takes both strength and perspective to do so.

It is a sorry reflection of the times that mothers who stay at home often describe their situation as a "privileged" one. Why should only the privileged be able to stay home with their children? An open debate about the quality and quantity of time spent in daycare would be a first step toward developing public policies – higher per-child tax exemptions, for instance, or more flexible hours of work – that would help those with smaller incomes to spend more time raising their children.

Ours is an impatient society. We don't like the notion of compromise. An overwhelming number of women have spent the past 20 years trying to convince themselves that they can work regular shifts at the office, and still be loving and involved mothers. Unfortunately, this hope has often amounted to women accommodating their employers first and their children second. Too tired, too frantic and too guilt-ridden, these mothers have deprived themselves of an enjoyable experience as parents. Alas, compromise comes with the territory when we become parents. The only way to improve child-care in this country is to acknowledge that someone's needs are going to have to be sacrificed. Must it continue to be the child's? ✦

Cathy Rindner Tempelsman is the author of Child-Wise *(Hearst Books:1994).*

Shocked and Appalled?

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One last observation...

"Boring, Insignificant Lesbian Sex"

Christina Hoff Sommers on the Perils and Pleasures of male faculty, condom races and dental dams at Smith College

A 1992 MEETING of the American Association of University Women, held at Mills College in Oakland, California, shows how far modern feminism has come – or gone. As at most "gender feminist" gatherings, the Mills College meeting had almost no men. One man, however, did figure prominently in a panel discussion called "The Perils and Pleasures of Feminist Teaching."

Raphael Atlas, professor of music at Smith College, had come to talk about what it is like to be a male feminist at a women's college. Raphael (as all the participants called him) was earnest and nonthreatening. He read his paper because, he explained, its contents were too emotional for a more informal delivery. He told us that being a male feminist at Smith College filled his life with "great anxiety." The course he gave last spring on women composers made him feel like "an imposter." He asked, "Is it honest to identify my project as feminist? ... Am I just one of those social and cultural forces trying to police women's voices?"

As we pondered these questions, Raphael told us about the many colleagues and students who believe that the few males at Smith "poisoned" the atmosphere. He said in anguished tones, "What do these women's voices say to me? I am alien. I do not belong. I believe them." I felt a bit less sorry for Raphael when he finished his confession by telling us that he finds it all "exciting."

It was the next panelist's turn to speak. "In feminist pedagogy," explained Faye Crosby, a psychology professor also from Smith, "you do not just theorize, but take action." For homework, she had instructed her introductory psychology students at Smith to buy three condoms, making eye contact with the vendor. She thought the assignment had been successful until several students pointed out that it was "heterosexist." It marginalized lesbians. They told her about dental dams – condom-like devices useful for safe lesbian oral sex.

Professor Crosby told us that during Parents' Weekend she had invited her students and their parents to a small interactive lecture. Condoms were again a theme. The class played a "condom relay race," in which parents and students raced each other to see which group of five could put five condoms on an unpeeled banana without breaking them. Said Professor Crosby, referring to the condom, "They had to own it and enjoy it."

Once again, Ms. Crosby thought all had gone well. She had been careful to make mention of the dental dams. But angry students pointed out to her that though she had shown the parents the dental dams, she hadn't used them in the relay races. They'd complained, she said, that "it was as if you said, oh, well, here are the dental dams – boring, insignificant lesbian sex ... now let's get to the really great and fun heterosexual sex." Professor Crosby ended by telling us about her guilt over having been "exclusionary."

"I felt terrible!"

Like Raphael, she was clearly exhilerated by how terrible she felt. ✦

Christina Hoff Sommers is an associate professor of philosophy at Clark University and the author of Who Stole Feminism? *(Simon & Schuster:1994) from which this article is excerpted.*

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